Negro and Radicalism – 1927

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The Negro and Bolshevism

Cincinnati, Ohio, September 7, 1927.
TO THE EDITOR OF THE ENQUIRER.

Dear Sir: Some weeks ago there appeared an article in The Enquirer purporting to come from an Eastern paper concerning the deadly peril to this country and its institutions in the large group of negroes which was being trained in Bolshevism at the Eastern University in Moscow. This article was referred to Mr. William Pickens, Field Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, New York City, for whatever comment he cared to make on the subject. He replied in a statement which was given wide publicity in the Eastern press. Unfortunately I am not in possession of this statement in its entirety, but excerpts from it are as follows:

"More than a tenth of the American population are negro people, but even not a twentieth part, perhaps not one-fiftieth, of American Communists are negroes. A New York newspaper has just 'discovered' the names and addresses of a few of these colored Communists with a resultant alarm and cry of 'Help! Murder! Congress must do something about it!' yet a much smaller proportion of negroes than whites have heeded the call of Communism, in spite of the relatively much more unfavorable situation of the negro population.

"In order to make this Russian menace sound still more alarming, one newspaper speaking of negro students that have gone to be educated in the Eastern University at Moscow, says: 'From 50 to 100 of these instruments of propaganda have been shipped out of the United States.' In fact, only five American negro students could, after a long campaign, be induced to take advantage of the Soviet Government's world-wide offer for people to come and study under free scholarships in their university at Moscow—but more than 1,200 other students of other colors accepted—white, yellow, Eastern and Western—American white people, English white people, French white people, German white people, and many white people from Asia. Only one negro from Africa accepted. One of the five American negro students died, so the remaining "peril" is: one African, four live American negroes and one dead one!

"I suspect that the reason why so much noise is made whenever anybody is reported to be trying to "arouse" American negroes, is that most American whites feel, deep down in their souls, that the negro ought to be aroused. We fear those whom we oppress; we are afraid that they may do what we think they ought to do. Not a single newspaper (with the exception, strange to relate, of one newspaper of Richmond, Va., which commented on the radical leanings of the negro Congress two years ago) has emphasized this point: that the way, and the only way, to prevent Moscow or somebody else from ultimately arousing the American negro is to treat the negro with more justice. A people treated as negroes are treated in America is certainly (as is stated by a Cincinnati paper, but in a different spirit) "the weakest place in the American armor." If the American negro proves, ultimately, to be more open to "foreign" intrigue than are other elements of the population, it will be the failure of America rather than that of the negro.

"More can be done in one year by defending the negro against being burned alive in Mississippi and Missouri and from jim-crowism and insult in Cincinnati than could ever be done in a generation of 'acts of Congress' and activities of the Department of Justice."

In this connection I might state, for your information, that there is probably no person in this country so well informed regarding the situation in so far as it affects colored people as Mr. Pickens, nor one who can speak with equal or more authority.

I am addressing this communication to you, not with the expectation of its being published, but merely because I think whoever wrote the editorial which appeared in your issue of September 6 should be better informed regarding the subject of his editorial, "The Negro and Bolshevism" than he apparently is. If the present "peril" of five negroes now in Russia (and I assure you that Mr. Pickens knows what he is talking about, as he recently saw and talked with all five), can be magnified into three groups of 50 each, God only knows to what extent other "perils" may be magnified. You have my authority to publish this communication if you care to do so.

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Negro, Colonization of- 1927

See Also: Africa, Current. (Back to Africa Movement.)
Race Problem - Mexico.